

the place where it is discovered, but in my presence. We have likewise found a large quantity of household furniture, made of earthen and iron ware, and some glass. At present this is all that I am at liberty to mention. Shortly will be published a general catalogue of all the things, which have hitherto been found; and this year will come out also the first volume of the paintings. Both these I will take care to convey to you.

XXIII. *Copy of a Letter from a learned Gentleman of Naples, dated February 25, 1755, concerning the Books and antient Writings dug out of the Ruins of an Edifice near the Site of the old City of Herculaneum; to Monsignor Cerati, of Pifa, F. R. S. sent to Mr. Baker, F. R. S. and by him communicated; with a Translation by John Locke, Esq; F. R. S.*

Read April 17, 1755. **I**N obedience to your commands, I send you the best account I can of the writings. You must know then, that within two years last past, in a chamber of a house, (or more properly speaking, of an antient villa, for by many marks it is certainly known, that the place, where they are now digging, was never covered with buildings, but was in the middle of a garden), there has been found a great quantity of rolls, about half a palm

palm long, and round; which appeared like roots of wood, all black, and seeming to be only of one piece. One of them falling on the ground, it broke in the middle, and many letters were observed, by which it was first known, that the rolls were of papyrus. The number of these rolls, as I am told, were about 150, of different sizes. They were in wooden cases, which are so much burnt, as are all the things made of wood, that they cannot be recovered. The rolls however are hard, though each appears like one piece. Our king has caused infinite pains to be taken to unroll them, and read them; but all attempts were in vain; only by flitting some of them, some words were observed. At length Signor Affemani, being come a second time to Naples, proposed to the king to send for one father Antonio, a writer at the Vatican, as the only man in the world, who could undertake this difficult affair. It is incredible to imagine what this man contrived and executed. He made a machine, with which, (by the means of certain threads, which being gummed, stuck to the back part of the papyrus, where there was no writing), he begins, by degrees, to pull, while with a sort of engraver's instrument he loosens one leaf from the other (which is the most difficult part of all), and then makes a sort of lining to the back of the papyrus, with exceeding thin leaves of onion (if I mistake not), and with some spirituous liquor, with which he wets the papyrus, by little and little he unfolds it. All this labour cannot be well comprehended without seeing. With patience superior to what a man can imagine, this good father has unrolled a pretty large piece of pa-

pyrus, the worst preserved, by way of trial. It is found to be the work of a Greek writer, and is a small philosophic tract (in Plutarch's manner) on music; blaming it as pernicious to society, and productive of softness and effeminacy. It does not discourse of the art of music. The beginning is wanting, but it is to be hoped, that the author's name may be found at the end: it seems however to be the work of a stoic philosopher; because Zeno is much commended. The papyrus is written across in so many columns, every one of about twenty lines, and every line is the third of a palm long. Between column and column is a void space of more than an inch. There are now unrolled about * thirty columns; which is about a half of the whole; this roll being one of the smallest: the letters are distinguishable enough. Father Antonio, after he has loosened a piece, takes it off where there are no letters; and places it between two crystals for the better observation; and then, having an admirable talent in imitating characters, he copies it with all the lacunæ, which are very numerous in this scorched papyrus; and gives this copy to the Canon Mazzocchi, who tries to supply the loss, and explain it. The letters are capital ones, and almost without any abbreviation. The worst is, the work takes up so much time, that a small quantity of writing requires five or six days to unroll, so that a whole year is already consumed about half this roll. The lacunæ, for the most part, are of one or two words, that may be supplied by

* Original—*Trenta*.

the context. As soon as this roll is finished, they will begin a Latin one. There are some so voluminous, and the papyrus so fine, that unrolled they would take up an hundred palms space. They tell me, that some of the Latin ones are in a running hand; which confirms the opinion of the Marquis Maffei, "That the character, by us absurdly called Gothic and Lombard, is the antient running-hand, corrupted by time." However, I have not seen any of these last. The curiosity of these papyri is, that there is no little staff of wood, on which they were rolled.

Thus I have told you all, that I know, concerning these papyri.

We may comfort ourselves, that the affair is in good hands; being under the care and conduct of so learned an antiquarian, as the Canonico Mazzocchi, and of this able and adroit Father Antonio.

XXIV. *An Account of the several Earthquakes of late felt at Constantinople; by his Excellency James Porter, Esq; his Majesty's Ambassador at that Place; in a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Wetstein, F. R. S. dated February 15, 1755.*

Read April 17, 1755. **H**istorians of the lower empire give us various accounts of earthquakes, which have happened at Constantinople. Gillius informs us of many of later date; and an ancient co-